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P 251141Z APR 08 ZDS

FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0662

INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE

RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

RHMFISS/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 000644

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D    C O P Y    -    REMOVED 'TRIPOLI MINIMIZED CONSIDERED'

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/SPG, S/CRS, DS/IP/AF, DS/DSS/CC

DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM KPKO SOCI AU SU ASEC

SUBJECT: JANJAWEED FIGHTING CONTINUES INSIDE EL FASHER

REF: A) KHARTOUM 557

B) KHARTOUM 538

¶1. (SBU) In yet another example of the clashes between Government of Sudan (GoS) military forces and unruly janjaweed elements that have been plaguing El Fasher for almost one month, on April 21 at approximately 2300 a truck of GoS Special Forces officers was stopped at a checkpoint in east El Fasher by Central Reserve Police (otherwise known as Border Intelligence Forces or janjaweed). The Special Forces officers were reportedly attempting to re-fuel, to which the Central Reserve Police objected given the lateness of the hour.

¶2. (SBU) According to UN and outside sources, the Central Reserve Police then initiated shooting, which lasted approximately one hour and by all accounts was heavy, given the type of weapons used (reports say machine gun fire). By the time the fighting subsided, one from each side was killed, including one Special Forces intelligence officer, who died on the spot. A Lieutenant Colonel in the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) confirmed the death of this officer, as did UNAMID sources. The identity of the other person killed remains unknown.

¶3. (SBU) There were reportedly up to 23 injured, who were taken to the El Fasher military hospital. Some of these injuries were considered critical and were referred to the civilian hospital for advanced care, reportedly leading to the premature discharge of patients already being treated there to free up bed space for the wounded soldiers.

¶4. (SBU) The Central Reserve Police involved in the incident were withdrawn to their camp in east El Fasher, near the Shala Prison, in an attempt to defuse tensions between the sides. This "evacuation" did not create the calm envisioned, as during the afternoon of April 22, GoS National Security attacked the Police in their camp. UN sources consider this action to be in retaliation for the clash the night before. The retaliation continued on April 23 at 0900, when shooting resumed between the National Security and Central Reserve Police forces near UN warehouse facilities. National Security maintained a heavy presence in that area until approximately 1300, resulting in restricted staff movement until its posture relaxed. No casualties were reported from that incident.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: There remains a fair amount of speculation among El Fasher residents as to the reason behind this continuation of GoS-janjaweed element fighting. The most likely indicates it was another manifestation of festering janjaweed frustration due to the GoS' non-payment of their salaries. As this issue remains unresolved (and exacerbated by the payment of some forces but not others), the tactics, however. The

Special Forces whom it engaged had been dispatched from Khartoum to serve as protection at the El Fasher branch of the Bank of Khartoum, in the event that the disgruntled Police tried to storm the facility to take their payment by force. Since the April 21 incident, the Special Forces have withdrawn from their posts; on April 24 FieldOff observed no significant armed presence in front of the Bank, where one had previously been stationed. The GoS' tight-lipped response to the encounter, which the NISS LTC dismissed as "friendly fire" and which another GoS representative claimed was instigated by "unknown assailants," indicates that it is trying to save face against a threat that it may have considerably underestimated. Given GoS liquidity problems, it's not surprising that there are some problems paying salaries, but one would think that payment of modest salaries to front line foot soldiers in Darfur would be a top priority, especially in the absence of adequate "regular" forces. We expect that the GoS will move to solve this situation quickly, before it loses even more support from fractious and unhappy Arab tribal elements in Darfur - the last popular support it retains, albeit tenuously - in Darfur.

FERNANDEZ